



GROWN IN DURHAM

ECAP

Durham County's Early
Childhood Action Plan

September 2021



Original Artwork by Local
Artist, Atigré Farmer



INTRODUCTION

There are nearly 35,000 children from birth through age 8 in Durham County. We believe each and every child deserves to grow up in a community where they can THRIVE.

In 2019, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services released [North Carolina's Early Childhood Action Plan \(ECAP\)](#). The plan sets forth a bold vision for North Carolina's children, focused on making steady progress towards achieving ambitious goals relating to children's health and development, safety and well-being, and learning.¹

Building off this statewide work, **Durham is now the first county in the state to create an ECAP specific to our community.** We are thrilled to share this report, "Grown in Durham: Durham's Early Childhood Action Plan," which serves as a blueprint for strengthening our early childhood systems in Durham. It was a collective labor of love and created with leadership from almost 150 parents, caregivers, early childhood providers, community leaders, and institutional leaders and the input of more than 1,000 parents across Durham who all had a little one in mind.

This report documents our work together over the past year, and it is intended to serve as a living, breathing document. Change is constant and the plan should be flexible and emergent. Implementing the strategies in the plan will require sustained funding, attention, and deep relational work to build trust and challenge our own beliefs and assumptions about the way our systems work. We are looking forward to getting started.

Why do we need an Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP) in Durham?

In Durham, not all children and families have the same opportunities to thrive. We believe all children deserve to grow up healthy, in safe and nurturing communities, where they can play, learn, and be ready to succeed in school and life.

To make this vision a reality, we need to work together to acknowledge, address, and dismantle the root causes* of the persistent disparities in early childhood outcomes.* The systemic racism* and oppression* faced by many families and communities in Durham—especially our communities that identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)*—have been the focus of our collaboration and planning. Racism* and poverty, and their economic, social, environmental, and health consequences, hurt our little ones in a unique way. Struggling to secure stable, safe housing, healthy foods, adequate healthcare, living wages, and more puts stress on a family and that stress is felt deeply

**Words marked with an asterisk can be found in the [Durham ECAP Glossary](#).*

INTRODUCTION

by young children. The first years of life are a time of rapid brain development that sets the foundation for the rest of a child's life, and experiencing toxic stress* can have long-term impacts on a child's development.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further revealed the systemic challenges and inequities that hold families back. Increasing poverty and unemployment, difficulty accessing healthcare and childcare, challenges with virtual learning, and increasing isolation and stress have placed heavy burdens on families in our community. As we respond to COVID-19 together and address racial injustices in Durham, this planning process has provided an important opportunity to bring our community and resources together towards shared goals in support of all our young children.

Who created the Durham ECAP?

The Durham Children's Initiative (DCI), with support and funding from Durham County, has convened families, community members, and more than 50 family- and child-serving agencies to imagine a stronger, more aligned and equitable early childhood system.

Over 1,000 parents, guardians and other caregivers of Durham's young children shared their ideas and leadership and helped create the plan. The stories, experiences, and leadership of parents and community members supporting young children in Durham have shaped the recommendations and strategies in the plan. Parents who have had to choose between paying rent, paying for child care, or paying for medical bills. Early childhood educators who do not earn enough to financially support their own children. Doulas who witness pregnant mothers' and birthing people's health concerns not being taken seriously. Immigrant and refugee families who are navigating a system with inadequate language or cultural supports in place. **Learning from those who are closest to the challenges**, including parents, front-line workers

like early childhood educators, doulas, and social workers, and community leaders, was critical to the development of this plan

How will we use the plan?

Durham has used the ECAP planning process as a starting point to set goals, recommend strategies, and create action plans to ensure every young child in Durham can thrive. This will require working together as a comprehensive system across sectors in partnership with families and communities. This plan has provided an opportunity to imagine a better future together—a chance to look inward and address root causes behind the disparities we see. To create a better future requires imagination—we have not yet seen a just, equitable world for our children to grow up in. This is hard work that requires time, trust, creativity, and attention.

How we come together to support our babies, toddlers, and young children speaks to our values and priorities as a community. We hope this plan encourages our entire community to deepen investments in upstream solutions that create better conditions for young children and their families to thrive. Most importantly, we hope this plan will amplify the voices of those most affected by these systems' challenges and identify resources to bring their ideas and solutions to life. We have a unique opportunity to build off the momentum of federal funding for early childhood in the [American Rescue Plan](#). Implementing the recommendations in this plan will require funding and support from across the community and beyond. **It is worth it for our children and for Durham's future.**

NOTE:

Throughout this plan, we will use the term parent to refer to any individual who is parenting a child—this can be a biological parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, other family member, godparent, older sibling, guardian, foster parent, adoptive parent, or anyone who is the primary caretaker for the child.*

The Durham ECAP Recommendations Seek to:

Value the voices and experiences of families in our community.

Ensure there is a set of universal, family- and child-focused supports that promote thriving for all.

Address root cause issues in an upstream way that prevent acute stress and trauma for families.

Ensure there is a set of culturally affirming,* anti-racist,* affordable supports that are responsive to/address family stress and trauma, as we work on the root cause issues.

Change harmful mental models* that prevent early childhood systems from changing in necessary ways.

Break down silos and build intentional cross-sector collaboration so we can strengthen our early childhood system as a whole.

REFLECTIONS ON PROCESS OF ECAP

(Reflections by Joy Spencer, Edits by Joy Lampkin Foster)

We noted the following about the process of formulating Durham's Early Childhood Action Plan.

A major red flag at the beginning that indicated an inequitable process was that the same relatively powerful players (institutions and individuals) that are typically at the table to set priorities, formulate plans, set policies and determine funding allocations and/or receive funding in Durham were involved. For the past decade or longer, the same players have been leading and we have not seen resources trickle down to the community in ways that empower and transform communities most affected by pressing human rights issues.

Specifically, the major government institutions, academic and medical institutions, and larger, more well-funded nonprofits were co-chairing the four ECAP workgroups and serving on a Governing Body. These are the same systems that, as they work to care for and support families and children, can also cause harm and perpetuate inequities. Yet, we had people leading the Early Childhood Action Plan who are paid to maintain those systems.

To begin to address this we reached out to a few community-rooted* leaders to ask them to join ECAP. Community-rooted folks who were present began to call out the lack of equity in the process and invited in other community-rooted leaders into ECAP to balance out lack of diversity in perspective and power. The presence of more community-rooted leaders in ECAP meetings awakened others participating in ECAP to the possibility that ECAP could be done a different way than other processes in Durham. Of critical importance is the fact that ECAP leadership actually listened to and implemented the advice of community-rooted leaders often.





Key factors that made receiving and implementing the advice of community-rooted leaders challenging include:

- Systems-heavy and institution-heavy leadership and the uncertainty of institutional and system leaders around what it might look like to do something different. For example, some of these leaders could not envision how to include and/or center community-rooted models. Some were closed-minded as opposed to approaching the ideas of community-rooted leaders with curiosity, wonder, imagination and open-mindedness.
- Institutional/systems leaders overriding the wisdom of community-rooted leaders with reports, statistics, “evidence-based” information, and other data.
- Institutional/systems leaders not truly wanting to partner and power share with community-rooted leaders.
- Some ECAP participants thinking they were allies but not truly doing the real work involved in genuine allyship.
- Other limiting beliefs and mental models held by systems leaders and institutional leaders.

A key factor in helping to move forward through these challenges to a more equitable process and hopefully more equitable outcomes was the eventual hiring of a community-rooted leader to lend their capacity to bring intentions around equity to life. In other words, having a community-rooted leader in a top decision-making/advisory role.

ECAP fell short in its process as it pertains to equity. This is in large part because of how it began. It did not start with community-rooted leadership. When you think of including community-rooted folks as a hindsight instead of at the beginning of a process, you miss the mark.

We do, however, think that through the iterative process of continuously bringing in more community-rooted expertise, we were able to get closer to equity than otherwise would have been.

We know that in order to get equitable outcomes, we must have equitable processes. Equitable processes always begin with working alongside those who are most impacted from the beginning of any endeavor. We believe that everyone in our community has role to play in advocating for and ensuring equitable processes and that by doing so we will begin to truly empower our youngest citizens.

WITH GRATITUDE

It is with the deepest gratitude that we acknowledge all of the people who have come together to envision a better future for Durham’s children. The Durham Early Childhood Action Plan was made possible with the energy and commitment of more than 1,500 people across the County. We also acknowledge the many, many people and parents who we were unable to connect with directly due to barriers in the planning process. Each and every person in Durham has something to contribute to making our community a better place for children and families.

We acknowledge that the land that Durham County occupies are the ancestral lands of the Shakori, Eno, and Tuscarora people and we acknowledge the violent history of settler colonialism.* Today, North Carolina recognizes eight tribes: Coharie, Lumbee, Meherrin, Occaneechi Saponi, Haliwa Saponi, Waccamaw Siouan, Sappony, and the Eastern Band of Cherokee. We recognize those peoples for whom these were ancestral lands as well as the many Indigenous people who live and work in the region today.ⁱⁱ We acknowledge that in Durham we live, work, and raise our young children on stolen land.

ECAP Participants Represented the Following Organizations



We acknowledge that Durham has been built and developed on wealth extracted from the “labor of enslaved Africans and their ascendants who suffered the horror of the transatlantic trafficking of their people, chattel slavery, and Jim Crow. We are indebted to their labor and their sacrifice, and we must acknowledge the tremors of that violence throughout the generations and the resulting impact that can still be felt and witnessed today.”ⁱⁱⁱ

We choose to name the historical oppression and continued inequities throughout this report, but by no means intend to diminish the incredible strength and joy cultivated within communities that have experienced intergenerational trauma and systemic racism.

We also acknowledge the time, energy, wisdom and dedication that all ECAP participants have brought to this challenging process during a challenging year. There has been incredible collaboration and participation from people across our early childhood system. We are deeply grateful. A special thanks is owed to the diverse group of parents, community members, providers and leaders and the varying organizations and communities they represent.

Below we recognize the ECAP governing body, workgroup co-chairs and participants, action planning teams, review teams and advisors to the process.

ECAP Participants

Alex Livas-Dlott	Chasity Newkirk	Holly McCoy*	Kelly Jasiura	Monica Richardson	Shalicia Jackson
Amber Wells	Chelsea Swanson	Humberto Trejo*	Dr. Kelley Massengale	Dr. Monique Link	Shannel Hall*
Amelia Windemuth	Cheri Coleman	Iris Reese	Dr. Kelly Sullivan	Monnie Griggs	Sharyn Flood
Ana Luna*	Chi Vo	J'Taime Lyons	Kendell Dorsey	Moriah Swick	Shawn Kuka Shefte
Angelina Schiavone	Christa Twyford Gibson	Jameka Wells	Kijuanna Monk*	Nadiyah Porter*	Sheila Arias*
Anthony Scott	Danielle Caldwell*	James Keaten	Kimberly Chavis	Nancy Henley	Sky Rusciano
Arssante Malone	Danielle Haynes	Janice Blackstone	Kristen Stefureac	Nicole Bagley	Sonya Ulrich
Asael Salinas	Danielle Johnson	Jaqueline Rivera	Kristin Meola	Nicole Lawrence	Stephanie Smith*
Ashley Bass Mitchell	Darryl Barnes	Jarice Singleton*	LaDonna Brown	Niya Kendrick*	Sue Cotterman
Ashley Taylor Jacobs*	David Reese	Jason Williams*	LaRhonda Leslie*	Dr. Oveta Mcintosh-Vick	Susan Yaggy
Atigré Farmer*	Deborah Bryson	Jennifer Meade	LaShay Richards*	Patience Mukelabai	Tamara Vanie*
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Avilamar Bastidas-Castillo*	DeDreana Freeman	Jess Schultz	Leigh Bordley	Portia Pope	Tara Parrish*
Barbara Gray	Deric Boston	Dr. Jillian Hurst	Lesley Babinski	Quanesha Archer	Tasha Melvin
Barker French	Donna Rewalt	Joseph Featherstone	Lician Hernandez	Rachel Galanter	Tavaris Adams
Ben Rose	Drew Cummings	Jovetta Whitfield	Linda Chappel	Rachel Stine	Taylor Webber Fields*
Berkeley Yorkery	Dr. Elizabeth Erickson	Jovonia Lewis	Linden Thayer	Rachel Taylor	Tiffany Solomon*
Dr. Beth Gifford	Elizabeth Granby	Joy Lampkin Foster*	Lindsay Terrell	Randy Trice*	Tosh Adams*
Betsy Broaddus	Elizabeth Snyder-Fickler	Joy Spencer*	Lindsey Bickers Bock	Rebecca Planchar	Tracee Ferguson
Bonnie Delaune	Ellen Reckhow	Juana Dominguez*	Lori Henderson	Rhonda Stevens	Tracy Howell*
Brie Dorsey	Emily Metzloff	June Shillito	Lorisa Seibel	Rikyla Turrentine*	Tricia Howard*
Brittney Lassiter	Emmy Eide	Dr. Karen Carmody	Love Anderson*	Rochelle Sanders*	Dr. Wanda Boone
Caitlin Georgas	Ernis Baker	Karen Halpin	Dr. Maria Small	Rowena Mudiappa	Wendy Vavrousek
Carla Peake	Erika White	Karen McLeod	Mary Davis	Sajdah Ali-George*	Wilmarie Cintron-Tyson
Carmen Alban	Erin Matoko	Karlene Fyffe Phillips	Mary Mathew	Sandra Rojas*	Xavier Cason
Cass Wolfe	Evelyn Ramirez	Katharine Cannon	Maya Jackson*	Sarah Allin	Yesenia Carlon*
Cate Elander	Faridah Bahume	Katherine Carpenter	Megan Pender	Sarah Reives	Yolanda Barrera*
Cathy Collie-Robinson	Gisele Crawford	Katie Starr	Melissa Ordonez*	Sarah Smith	Yucconda Porter*
Dr. Collin McColskey-Leary	Grace Smith	Kelly Cosby*	Michael Page	Sara Platek	Yuliana Lopez
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					Zulaykha Clemons-Dunn

* Parent and Community Leader; honored and recognized for their contribution and expertise with compensation

Funders and Facilitators of the Planning Process: Durham County and the Durham Children’s Initiative (DCI)

For a full list of the participating individuals, organizations, focus groups and other contributors, see “[Our Acknowledgements](#).”

DURHAM ECAP OVERVIEW

What is in Durham's Early Childhood Action Plan?

Click below to navigate through the report

OUR PROCESS

How we created this plan as a Durham early childhood community.

VISION

What Durham wants to see for young children from birth to age eight, their families, and our early childhood systems.

SYSTEM OVERVIEWS

Key strengths and challenges of our early childhood system in Durham to be able to implement the recommendations and meet the targets and sub-targets of the NC ECAP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposals for how we use the strengths of our early childhood system to address the challenges and create a community where all children thrive.

STRATEGIES

Proposed steps (~3 per recommendation) to be taken by individuals, agencies, groups, organizations, or others in Durham to bring the recommendation to life.

As a first step of implementation, these strategies will be reviewed in depth with the proposed implementation partners to confirm feasibility, resource needs, and implementation plans.

ACTION PLANS

Plans with specific, measurable, actionable steps to implement each strategy.

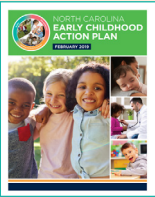
As a first step of implementation, these proposed action steps will be reviewed in depth with the proposed implementation partners to confirm feasibility, resource needs and implementation plans.

INDICATORS

County-level indicators identified by the NC ECAP to measure population-level progress towards reaching our shared vision as we implement the recommendations.

OUR PROCESS

1 ESTABLISH



- North Carolina created the Early Childhood Action Plan (ECAP).
- Durham County and Durham Children's Initiative partnered together to create the first County-level ECAP.

2 PREPARE



- Hired planning team (DCI ECAP Project Manager and Durham County Early Childhood Coordinator).
- Built relationships with early childhood and community leaders and prepared to launch the planning process.

3 DISCOVER



100+ people came together into 4 ECAP Workgroups.



Listened to the wisdom of parents and communities about their experiences raising and supporting young children in Durham.



Examined local and comparative data for each of the NC ECAP targets and sub-targets.



Mapped all of the early childhood services and resources in Durham.

4 DESCRIBE



Identified our 12 goal areas, targets, and sub-targets to focus on in the Durham ECAP.



Documented the strengths and challenges of our early childhood system to meet the ECAP goals, targets, and sub-targets and our progress towards those targets.

5 IDEATE



Prioritized 200+ strategies identified by 1) 1,000+ Durham parents, guardians, and caregivers, 2) workgroup participants, and 3) existing local, state and national reports.



Reorganized 80+ highest priority strategies into 21 Durham ECAP recommendations.

6 ITERATE



21 small Action Planning Teams worked together to review ideas from parents, research and data to prioritize ~3 strategies to bring each recommendation to life.



Shared their proposed strategies with ECAP Reviewers, parents and community members, direct service providers, and other experts to revise their action plans.

7 WRITE + REVIEW



Wrote the Durham Early Childhood Action Plan and reviewed with many stakeholders.

8 PREPARE TO IMPLEMENT



- Launching an ongoing collective decision-making structure.
- Prioritizing strategies for implementation and raising funds.
- Setting up long-term staffing, communication and collaboration structures.

OUR PROCESS



Limitations

There were limitations to our work that we want to share to help inform any future participatory planning processes. For a full reflection of the limitations, please read the full Durham ECAP document, "[Our Process](#)."

Systems change work requires building trust and trust-building requires sustained time.

This is only the beginning and we hope to learn from these limitations to build a stronger network of local, early childhood changemakers.

Our biggest limitation was our ability to fully center voices from marginalized* communities in Durham. Parents' voices and the voices of those with lived experience navigating our early childhood systems must be central to any early childhood systems change efforts. Despite efforts to shift and respond to feedback along the way, we recognize that the design and nature of this planning process was not fully equitable. For instance, the parent survey respondents skewed wealthier, whiter, and highly educated. In response, trusted community leaders held focus groups and more targeted community conversations to prioritize needs, dreams, and ideas from BIPOC communities, particularly BIPOC families with low wealth. The planning process itself shifted as well to move from larger workgroups to smaller action planning teams to address barriers

Over 150 ECAP participants, including parents, early childhood providers, and system leaders

More than 1,000 parents, caregivers, and guardians who shared their ideas

More than 50 early childhood educators and child care directors

More than 250 hours of cross-agency and community conversation on Zoom

13 conversations with early childhood-focused committees and taskforces

21 recommendations

58 strategies



Basic Needs Workgroup Meeting on Zoom, October 2020



Google Jamboard from Safe and Nurtured Workgroup Meeting, September 2020

that included language, meeting times, pacing, and communication style of the meetings. Despite these efforts, we recognize that we did not do enough to intentionally create accessible opportunities hear from parents with disabilities, LGBTQIA+* parents, Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities, children, youth, parents who have lived experience with child protective services, and justice-involved parents. As we move forward, the implementation team will need to build relationships with trusted community leaders and members of these groups.

The other major limitation relates to the breadth of the plan. We made an intentional choice to focus on root cause issues that drive disparities in early childhood outcomes, and this choice means that

our plan is more comprehensive and far reaching than expected. Because of this, in addition to our not adequately engaging marginalized parents, we also were not able to fully leverage other types of expertise in our community that relate to all of the systems that are included in our plan. Follow-ups will be needed, and the plan may shift as we continue to learn from those with lived and content expertise in these areas.

Systems change work requires building trust and trust building requires sustained time. This is only the beginning and we hope to learn from these limitations to build a stronger network of local, early childhood changemakers.

Parents and Caregiver Voices

While the planning process had its fair share of limitations, we have also worked hard to be transparent and responsive to parent and caregiver voices. Below are just a few examples of the many perspectives, dreams, and ideas from Durham parents and caregivers that fuel the change we wish to see for our families and young children.

BEST PART OF SUPPORTING DURHAM'S YOUNG CHILDREN:

“ Going in and seeing the smiling faces; hearing the first words; seeing them taking their first steps; seeing their parents' faces when they're growing up.
Durham Early Childhood Educator ”

“ The sense of discovery leads to a sense of agency as the students are mastering concepts and seeing what they've learned.
Durham K-3 teacher ”

STRENGTH IN MY COMMUNITY THAT SUPPORTS FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN?

“ Local organizations that provide supports and care (starting at prenatal) for families with young children
Durham Parent ”

“ Other parents willing to help each other.
Durham Parent ”

“ A lot of black and brown leadership and brilliance.
Durham Parent ”

BIGGEST CHALLENGE I HAVE FACED RAISING YOUNG CHILDREN IN DURHAM:

“ My own self care.
Durham Parent ”

“ Going back to work because of the fact that daycare is so expensive and we cannot afford it.
Durham Parent ”

IDEAS TO MAKE DURHAM A BETTER PLACE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES:

“ We need more money, people providing childcare paid living wages, and a Universal Basic Income.
Durham Parent ”

“ Free universal preschool (at the very least for those who need it) and paid family leave.
Durham Parent ”

VISION

Durham's Early Childhood Action Plan

All Durham's children will get a healthy start and develop to their full potential in safe and nurturing families, schools, and communities.

Early Childhood Systems Strengthening

The early childhood system as a whole is aligned, sustainable, accessible, and values the expertise and leadership of the communities caring for children.

Basic Needs

Children grow up in families, schools, and communities where basic needs are met.

Safe & Nurtured

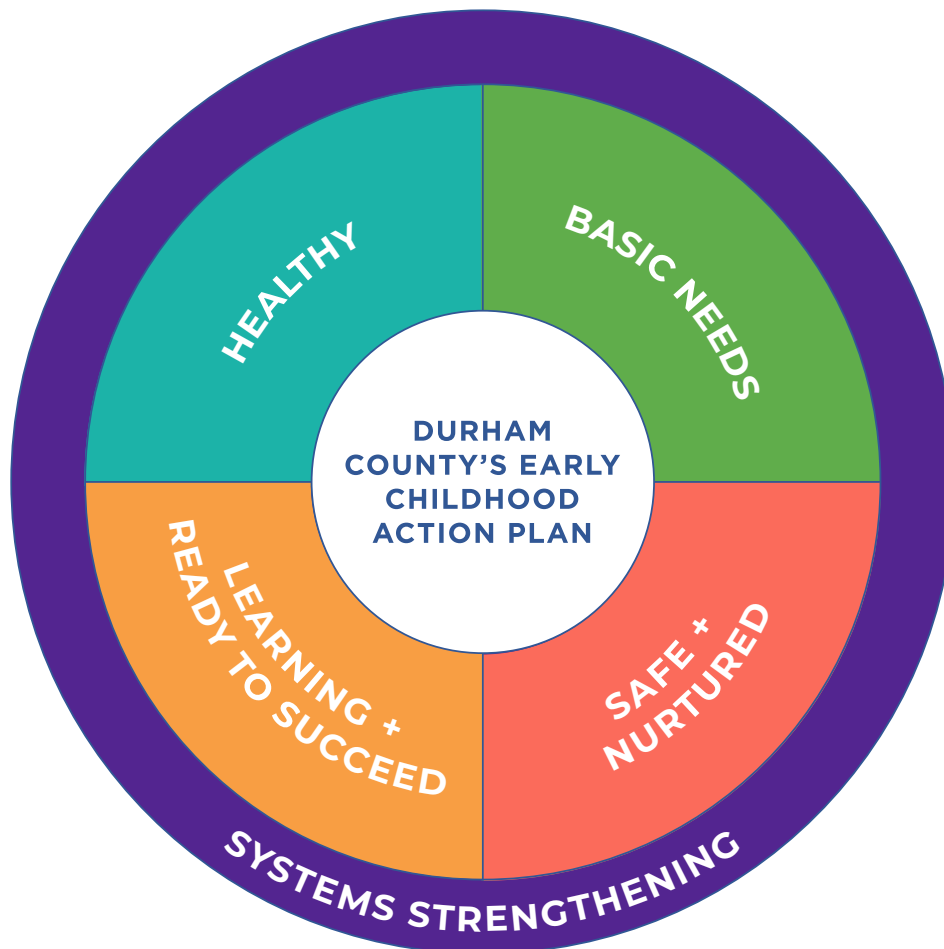
Children grow confident and resilient in safe, stable, and nurturing families, schools, and communities; parents are supported and knowledgeable about child development.

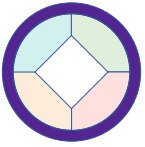
Healthy

Children from birth through age 8, mothers, and birthing people* are healthy* and thrive in environments that support their health and well-being.

Learning & Ready

Children are surrounded by the support they need to be curious, explore, and engage in their own learning.





Our Early Childhood System

Durham County's early childhood system "includes all the places and people that influence the experiences of children, prenatal to age eight, and their families."^{iv}

These places may include a child's home and neighborhood, Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) and child care centers, elementary schools, public parks, doctor's offices, and more. The people may include family members, friends, early childhood educators, doctors, nurses, doulas, teachers, therapists, social workers and more. All of these people and places that influence young children and their families in Durham, also exist within a broader historical, social and political context.

34,799
Children

from birth through age 8 in Durham County.^v

Through the ECAP planning process, we explored the strengths and challenges of the following key parts of our early childhood system in Durham:

Family Support System:

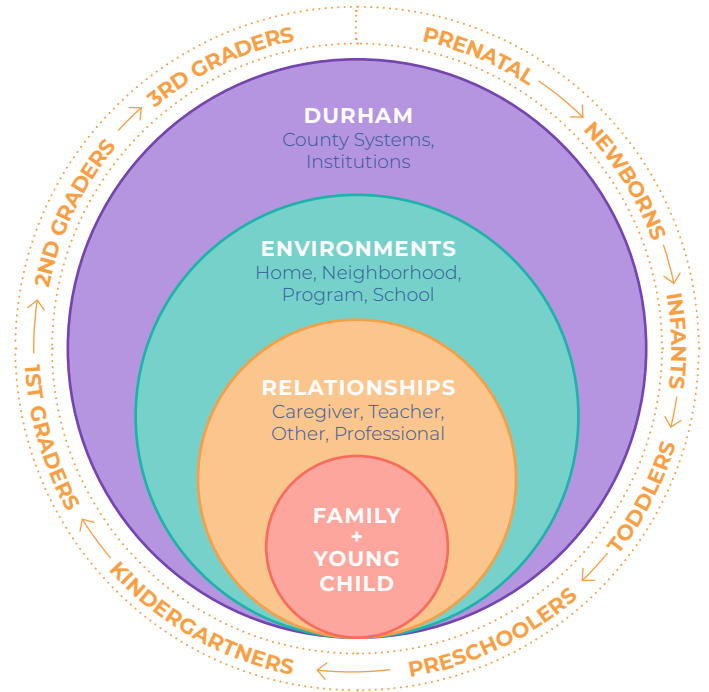
The system of people, institutions, and resources that support families' social-emotional health and access to basic needs in a society that does not allocate resources equitably. This system is supposed to help ensure that all families have their **basic needs met** and that all children are **safe and nurtured**.

Maternal and Child Health System:

The system of people, institutions and resources that support family and child health. This system is supposed to help ensure that all children in Durham are **healthy**.

Early Learning System:

The system of people, institutions, and resources that support a child's early learning and play at home, in the community, and in educational settings. This system is supposed to help ensure that all children are **learning and ready to succeed**.



Adapted from the [Colorado Early Childhood Framework](#)

Based on analysis of relevant data and listening carefully to the perspectives of parents and people across all parts of our early childhood system, the six following themes emerged.



Themes from Across Durham's Early Childhood System

THEME 1:

Focusing on Root Causes Behind Disparities in Early Childhood Outcomes

—
Primary takeaway:

In order to see significant improvement in persistent disparities in early childhood outcomes, we must tackle racism and poverty directly.

“ “ Because they are easier to implement, we are still often focused on programmatic solutions to systemic problems. ” ”
ECAP Participant

THEME 2:

Centering Parents and Communities with Lived Experience as Experts

—
Primary takeaway:

Too often the parents and communities who are closest to the challenges with our early childhood system are not the ones centered in decision-making about what should happen to address those challenges.

“ “ Include and involve those with lived experience at the beginning and give them decision making power. SHARE THE POWER. ” ”
ECAP Participant

THEME 3:

Supporting Families within Contexts of Culture and Community

—
Primary takeaway:

Families want to receive support and care within the context of their cultures and communities in a way that promotes a sense of belonging.

“ “ Not enough providers and decision makers that reflect the population served. ” ”
ECAP Participant

“ “ Too much blame on parents, and not enough blame on system for creating these inequities. ” ”
ECAP Participant



THEME 4:

Building Awareness About and Investment in Supports during Early Childhood

Primary takeaway:

We must build on existing momentum and expertise to help everyone understand the value of attention to—and investment in—the early years.



As a teacher, I see how all the toys have a purpose and I can see how they develop as a child, their language, their mind... But as parents we all need more parent education to understand the value of the classroom and the value of playing.

**Durham Parent +
Early Childhood Educator**



THEME 5:

Strengthening the Network of Services, Programs, and Resources Available to Families

Primary takeaway:

Durham is rich in resources for families, but in order for all families to have access to these resources, we need to make the service system easier to understand and address barriers to access and usability.



Create a user-friendly system to help families not feel threatened or not understanding, help us to feel comfortable to navigate.

Durham Parent



THEME 6:

Communication and Collaboration Within Durham's Early Childhood System

Primary takeaway:

Durham has a strong history of collaboration and there are opportunities to reduce duplication and improve communication and data sharing.



Desire to communicate across organizations with shared goals.

ECAP Participant



SYSTEMS OVERVIEWS



Our Family Support System

The system of people, institutions, and resources that support families' social-emotional health and access to basic needs in a society that does not allocate resources equitably. This system is supposed to help ensure that all families have their **basic needs met** and that all children are **safe and nurtured**.

“ Everything is calm when needs are met and it becomes angry and agitated when they're not. ”
Durham Parent

Basic Needs

Supports and system change efforts to ensure all families have:

Economic security and prosperity



“It's hard to live decent even with a good job.”
- *Durham Parent*

46% of Durham County's young children aged 0-6 live below 200 percent of the federal poverty level^{vi}

Enough healthy, nutritious and culturally relevant food



“It's expensive to make sure we have healthy food in the house and I have a two-income household.”
- *Durham Parent*

20.2% of children in Durham are projected to face food insecurity in 2021^{vii}

Safe and secure housing



“Difficult to get housing. Even a 1 bedroom is unaffordable.”
- *Durham Parent*

19.2% of households spend at least 30% of their income on housing^{viii}

Access to basic family essential supplies



“Mothers donating milk, formula, and baby food on social media.”
- *Durham Parent*

15.2% of the need for diapers is met in Durham^{ix}

SYSTEMS OVERVIEWS



Our Family Support System (Continued)

“Something going through my mind constantly lately is having more social and emotional support for my kids. We have to recognize that we’re going through things too as men, but then we need to recognize what we need to do for our children in that respect. My kids are really going through it right now.
It’s hard, man.”
Durham Parent”

Safe and Nurtured

Support and system change efforts to ensure all children are safe and nurtured include:

Efforts to promote community safety and wellness



“I’ve been excited seeing him take his first steps and seeing him meet his milestones, but then you see what’s going on outside and you need to be more prepared and hypervigilant.”
- *Durham Parent*

#1 top community issue identified by Durham County residents is violent crime^x

Social-emotional and mental health support for parents and families



“There are moments when I feel like I’m going crazy not being around adults and keeping up with school, night shifts at work, and getting support for my youngest with a developmental delay. My own mental health is a big barrier.”
- *Durham Parent*

#2 top health problem identified by Durham County residents is mental health^{xi}

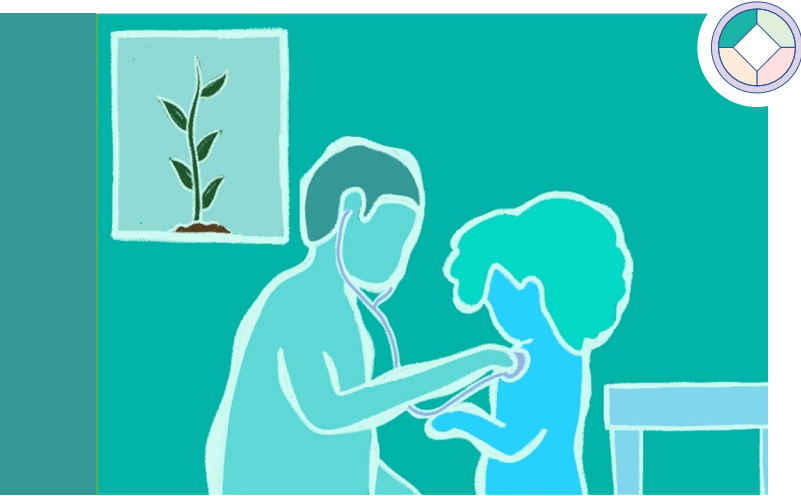
Social-emotional and mental health support for children



“I think we are afraid cause of the stigma. The children will then be labeled as a child with emotional problems.”
- *Durham Parent*

37% of parents surveyed for the Durham ECAP had concerns about their child’s emotions and behaviors in the last 12 months^{xii}

SYSTEMS OVERVIEWS



Our Maternal and Child Health System

The system of people, institutions and resources that support family and child health. This system is supposed to help ensure that all children in Durham are **healthy**.

Maternal and child health are closely linked and significantly influence each other. Maternal health covers preconception through postpartum and interconception periods. Child health begins in utero and continues through birth and transitions to pediatric care once the child is born. Maternal and child health both influence and are influenced by access and outcomes across other parts of our early childhood system.

Maternal Healthcare



"Giving birth at the hospital was not a good experience."
- *Durham Parent*

Babies born to Black mothers in Durham County are **4.42 times** more likely than babies born to white mothers to die before their first birthday^{xiii}

Child Healthcare



"Some kids don't have healthcare access which can impact their future when they grow up."
- *9th grader at Durham Public Schools*

62.6% of children aged 0-15 months and **68.8%** of children ages 3-6 years who are enrolled in Medicaid and Health Choice received regular well-child visits^{xiv}



Aside from COVID, I would say [my biggest challenge has been] navigating the system of care and paying for care for my child with congenital heart defects.

Durham Parent



SYSTEMS OVERVIEWS



Our Early Learning System

The system of people, institutions, and resources that support a child's early learning and play at home, in the community, and in educational settings. This system is supposed to help ensure that all children are **learning and ready to succeed**.

90% of brain development happens before age 5, so learning and play at home, in the community, in early care and education settings, and in elementary school through age 8 sets the foundation for the rest of a child's life. Ensuring that early learning environments are developmentally appropriate and engage children in their own learning through play and exploration is critical. The earlier that concerns with how a child is developing are identified, the easier it is to address them to support that child's later development and learning.

Early Learning at Home and in Community



"Parents are the first educators of our children which is why we have a difficult but very important job."
- *Durham Parent*

74.6% of parents surveyed for the Durham ECAP with children 0-4 are likely to participate in free programs that support families with early childhood learning strategies^{xvi}

Early Care and Education



"I make too much money to get any subsidy. I went into debt paying for daycare and pre-K."
- *Durham Parent*

More than 13% of family income is spent on early care and education in centers and family child care homes, regardless of a child's age^{xvii}

Early Intervention



"Parents who already have it in their mind what to look for are able to get into the referral and care system to get diagnosed quicker."
- *Durham Parent*

24% of parents surveyed for the Durham ECAP with children 0-4 and **17%** with children K-3 had concerns that their child might have a developmental delay or disability^{xviii}

Kindergarten Through Third Grade



"Being able to identify [with your students] not just because you're Black, but also where you come from."
- *Durham Parent*

36% of Durham Public Schools students were reading above proficiency for 3rd-8th grade students on EOGs^{xix}

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Durham's Early Childhood System

1. Address institutional racism as a root cause and share power with parents and communities.
2. Ensure early childhood professionals across sectors are respected, well-compensated, highly trained, and reflect the communities they serve.
3. Increase resource awareness and create an easily navigable service system for families with young children.
4. Facilitate data sharing between agencies and with communities to better understand areas of greatest need, track progress, and promote transparency, accountability, and systems-building.
5. Ensure early childhood services are accessible and welcoming to families regardless of immigration status or English language proficiency.
6. Expand opportunities for accessible, inclusive, safe, and family-friendly enrichment activities and public spaces.
7. Advocate for workplaces that understand and support the needs of families with young children.



Ensuring Durham's Young Children and their Families Have Their Basic Needs Met

8. Ensure families with young children have economic security and opportunities for wealth-building and long-term economic prosperity.
9. Promote access to safe, stable, affordable, and healthy housing for families with young children.
10. Ensure families with young children have access to enough affordable, culturally relevant, healthy food every day.
11. Ensure families have the essential family supplies needed to support pre- and post-partum health and to care for babies and young children.
12. Provide reliable and free or low-cost transportation to early childhood services.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensuring Durham's Young Children Are Safe and Nurtured

13. Promote preventive and responsive approaches to foster social-emotional, mental health, and resilience* of young children and their families.
14. Reimagine Social Services and Child Protective Services to become more trauma-informed, anti-racist, and focused on prevention.
15. Ensure birth through 3rd grade learning environments are trauma-informed, culturally affirming, gender affirming, and focused on social-emotional health.



Ensuring Durham's Young Children Are Healthy

16. Create and implement approaches to culturally affirming, anti-racist maternal and child healthcare.
17. Ensure families have access to convenient, affordable, preventive, and responsive maternal and child healthcare.

Ensuring Durham's Young Children Are Learning and Ready to Succeed

18. Invest in a sustainable child care system to provide high quality, culturally affirming, and developmentally appropriate* early learning experiences that are affordable and accessible to all.
19. Develop a coordinated transition between early childhood education and elementary school that emphasizes developmentally-appropriate practice, exploration, and play.
20. Ensure children with developmental delays and/or disabilities learn in environments where they can thrive and their families have the support they need to advocate and care for their children.
21. Promote and support early literacy and play for young children starting at birth in partnership with families and caregivers.



Recommendation	Strategies
<p>01 <i>Anti-Racism and Power Sharing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Conduct a well-resourced community review process to vet and assess the drafted ECAP for anti-racism, power sharing, equity, and liberation.* 1.2 Engage community-rooted* leaders to lead the implementation of the ECAP with institutions and larger organizations supporting them. Invest in capacity building to fund and support community-rooted leaders' work. 1.3 Create opportunities that promote constant unlearning, re-learning, growth, and mindset shifts around authentic community engagement, power sharing, and institutional and structural racism for community and system leaders.
<p>02 <i>Cross-Sector Early Childhood Professionals</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Raise compensation (including pay and benefits) to attract, recruit and retain highly-qualified teachers in all early learning environments. Seek public and private funding sources aimed at sustainability. 2.2 Invest in increasing access to the existing culturally responsive, effective and engaging professional development opportunities for the early childhood workforce in Durham (inclusive of Family Child Care Homes; Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care; specialist positions) that are funded by public and private sources. Ensure early childhood educators are paid for their time. Include paid training/mentoring models to promote quality classroom interactions with young children. 2.3 Promote a diverse workforce of providers that serve children and families across sectors by strengthening career pathways, including education and training.
<p>03 <i>Awareness and Navigation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Develop a Peer Navigation program for parents of young children accessing community resources and services. 3.2 Provide geographically diverse single-stop locations accessible and welcoming to families with young children.
<p>04 <i>Data Sharing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Convene a set of community conversations and identify an ongoing community oversight structure to address opportunities and concerns related to early childhood data sharing and inform future data collection and data sharing efforts. 4.2 Address barriers to data collection and sharing across agencies and age groups so that community stakeholders can continue to identify the areas of greatest need, to track progress in these areas that have been identified as a focus, and to generate funding for strategies that are creating promising results.

Recommendation	Strategies
	<p>4.3 Pilot data sharing initiatives that support data collection to report on ECAP indicators that are not currently available at the county level and share that data transparently to increase community accountability.</p>
<p>05 <i>Language Justice</i></p>	<p>5.1 Center language justice* in all services, supports, and programs offered to young children and their families in Durham.</p> <p>5.2 Improve service coordination and partnerships among stakeholders to comprehensively address the health needs of people whose native language is a language other than English, people with different levels of schooling, and people who primarily rely on forms of communication that are not written.</p> <p>5.3 Expand early learning support in all settings to non-native English speaking families.</p>
<p>06 <i>Family-Friendly Public Spaces and Enrichment Activities</i></p>	<p>6.1 Enhance Durham’s public spaces and local developments to become more family-friendly, safe and inclusive of all of Durham’s residents and to encourage playful learning throughout the community.</p> <p>6.2 Invest in programs and activities that already exist to improve marketing/promotion and reduce barriers to access (e.g. transportation).</p>
<p>07 <i>Family Friendly Workplaces</i></p>	<p>7.1 Build a coalition of Durham businesses, families, early childhood experts and labor groups to promote, advocate for, and build awareness about family-friendly workplaces in Durham.</p> <p>7.2 Advocate for state and federal family-friendly workplace policies and implement financial incentives for existing/new policies.</p> <p>7.3 Empower families with the knowledge and tools needed to advocate for family-friendly workplaces.</p>
<p>08 <i>Economic Prosperity</i></p>	<p>8.1 Provide direct cash payments to low- and middle-income parents.</p> <p>8.2 Support a broad spectrum of parents, guardians, and caregivers of young children to get and sustain careers that provide a living wage, opportunities for wealth-building, benefits, worker protections, family-friendly policies, and opportunities for career progression.</p> <p>8.3 Make more equitable entrepreneurial and small business investments to diversify the power to shape culture.</p>

Recommendation	Strategies
<p>09 <i>Housing Security</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9.1 Help families with young children prevent evictions and foreclosures including families who are in need of housing support but who are not typically eligible for public assistance. 9.2 Preserve and expand safe, secure and affordable rental housing. Safe, stable housing leads to improved outcomes for children. 9.3 Prioritize families with young children for safe emergency shelter and ensure that young children and families are connected with trauma-informed, culturally, developmentally, and age-appropriate supports.
<p>10 <i>Food Security</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10.1 Make enrollment in supplemental food and nutrition benefits programs, especially during times of disaster and recovery, easier and more flexible for eligible families with small children. 10.2 Expand access to healthy, culturally relevant food to all families with young children who need it, focused on addressing racial injustices in our food system. 10.3 Increase access to healthy and culturally relevant foods in early learning and pre-K through 3rd grade settings.
<p>11 <i>Essential Family Supplies</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11.1 Expand the capacity of programs that increase access to essential supplies such as car seats, diapers, beds, clothing, bottles, breast pumps, etc. so that more families who need them will have access to these basic needs items. 11.2 Align services that increase access to family essential supplies with providers working with families (like health care providers, home visitors, child care providers, and others) to more quickly and more efficiently meet the needs of families.
<p>12 <i>Transportation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12.1 Ensure the interests of parents and families with young children are represented in city, county, and regional transportation planning and decision-making. 12.2 Gather rider data to advocate for bus stops and bus routes that are closer to child care providers, medical facilities, and other commonly visited early childhood service. 12.3 Explore options for microtransit to fill in the gaps in public transportation for families with young children.

Recommendation	Strategies
<p>13</p> <p><i>Child and Family Social-Emotional Health, Mental Health, and Resilience</i></p>	<p>13.1 Address the root causes of family stress that lead to community and domestic violence; promote utilization of and expand access to strategies that prevent community and domestic violence and promote coordinated community response.</p> <p>13.2 Strengthen the local ecosystem of culturally affirming, community-rooted supports for families' social-emotional and mental health that help families respond to stress in their lives and support their children's social-emotional health.</p>
<p>14</p> <p><i>Social Services and Child Protective Services</i></p>	<p>14.1 Expand the foundation of preventive services in Durham and identify strategies to connect families to services sooner.</p> <p>14.2 Embed early childhood development principles into child welfare systems and practices through training and support for individuals who work with cases involving infants or toddlers.</p> <p>14.3 Promote a trauma-informed, anti-racist environment for families and staff that 1) acknowledges, mitigates, and repairs harm that has been perpetuated by child welfare systems and 2) supports wellness and anti-racism work for child welfare staff integrated into the whole department.</p>
<p>15</p> <p><i>Trauma-Informed, Affirming Learning Environments Focused on Social-Emotional Health</i></p>	<p>15.1 Create systems which support young children's growth by focusing on the skills, processes and procedures that are needed for reducing stress (adaptive coping), increasing good decision-making, and healthy expression of emotion (effective self-regulation), with attention to trauma and resilience in the wake of trauma.</p> <p>15.2 Train more birth through 8 teachers and school staff to adopt practices, policies, and pedagogy that are anti-racist, gender-affirming, and culturally affirming.</p> <p>15.3 Increase the number of culturally responsive support staff in elementary schools and childcare settings.</p>
<p>16</p> <p><i>Anti-Racist Healthcare</i></p>	<p>16.1 Engage maternal and child healthcare facilities in quality improvement efforts to address racial and ethnic disparities in care and patient education.</p> <p>16.2 Improve training for providers to provide culturally competent and inclusive maternal and child healthcare and health education.</p>

Recommendation	Strategies
	<p>16.3 Report data on maternal and infant outcomes by race and ethnicity in a timely manner. Support review of the causes behind every maternal and infant death.</p>
<p>17 <i>Healthcare Access</i></p>	<p>17.1 Expand access to relational prenatal and postpartum supports, including birth and postpartum doulas, group prenatal care, and prenatal and postpartum support groups.</p> <p>17.2 Providers/medical systems should build intentional relationships with community-based organizations, to offer community resources to better serve their patients needs.</p> <p>17.3 Educate families about healthy pregnancies, births, and childhoods in culturally competent and equitable ways. Ensure that education is developed and provided in ways that meet the needs of the community.</p>
<p>18 <i>Early Care and Education</i></p>	<p>18.1 Advocate for child care subsidy reforms that increase reimbursement rates and expand eligibility and affordability for families.</p> <p>18.2 Develop and pilot a local community awareness campaign about the critical role and value of early childhood education, across settings.</p> <p>18.3 Expand supports for universal, affordable infant and toddler care.</p> <p>18.4 Secure additional investment in Durham PreK to ensure the program’s sustainability and expand to 3 year olds.</p>
<p>19 <i>Transition to Kindergarten</i></p>	<p>19.1 Invest in the infrastructure to create a more integrated and aligned early childhood to K–12 system; working towards the existence of comprehensive pre-K to 12 public school system.</p> <p>19.2 Strengthen the partnership between community partners, providers, families, and schools in order to facilitate an easier transition from home/ pre-K to Kindergarten.</p> <p>19.3 Support schools in being “ready” to meet each child’s emotional and academic needs at Kindergarten entry and through the early grades, regardless of their early childhood education experiences, by emphasizing developmentally-appropriate and play-based learning.</p>

Recommendation	Strategies
<p>20</p> <p><i>Inclusion for Children with Developmental Delays and/or Disabilities</i></p>	<p>20.1 Promote true inclusivity and integration for children with developmental delays, disabilities, and other high support needs in early learning experiences starting with a comprehensive needs and assets assessment on the State of Inclusion in Durham.</p>
<p>21</p> <p><i>Early Literacy and Play</i></p>	<p>21.1 Engage, empower, and build capacity of parents, guardians, and caregivers to support children’s early literacy development and play outside the classroom from birth.</p> <p>21.2 Expand, amplify, and strengthen research-based, play-based early literacy initiatives in school, child care, and community settings to strengthen community impact.</p> <p>21.3 Ensure that the single stop shop and peer navigators recommended in the Recommendation 3 (‘resource awareness and service navigation’) provide parents with foundational knowledge about early childhood development and early literacy and the importance of those resources that are available.</p>



INDICATORS

The table below lists the North Carolina Early Childhood Action Plan measures that have been prioritized for Durham. These are population level measures that track directional progress as we implement the above recommendations and strategies. These measures were prioritized as they are: accessible at the County level; reported consistently; track progress towards addressing root cause challenges; and focused on the

areas where Durham lags behind the state and comparable counties.

Implementing the recommendations will create positive change that can also be measured at the individual and organizational levels. The action plans also share ways to hear more from parents and collect data that does not currently exist at the population level.

Increasing or Decreasing by 2026

BASIC NEEDS

Decrease

- Percent of families with young children living in poverty
- Child food insecurity rate
- Percent of children with low access to healthy food
- Children experiencing homelessness in K-3
- Families with high housing cost burden
- Children with confirmed elevated blood lead levels
- Rates of emergency department visits for asthma care

Increase

- + Percent of eligible families receiving state and federal food and nutrition assistance benefits
- + Percent of families with diaper need met

SAFE + NURTURED

Decrease

- Substantiated maltreatment rates
- Recurrence of maltreatment
- Foster care entry

Increase

- + Permanency for children in foster care



Increasing or Decreasing by 2026

HEALTHY

Decrease

- Infant mortality racial disparity ratio
- Infants born with low birth weight

Increase

- + Breastfeeding rates
- + Regular well-child visits
- + Testing for lead poisoning

LEARNING + READY TO SUCCEED

Decrease

- Percent of median family income spent on child care
- Early childhood educator turnover

Increase

- + Durham PreK enrollment
- + Early childhood educator pay
- + Early childhood educator post-secondary attainment
- + Kindergarten readiness
- + Reach of Infant Toddler program and NC Preschool Exceptional Children program
- + Infant Toddler program outcomes
- + Third grade reading

OUR NEXT STEPS

Through the end of 2021, the ECAP Planning team (ECAP Program Manager at DCI, the Early Childhood Coordinator at Durham County, and two community advisors) will support the following implementation preparation activities:

- Developing a representative ECAP steering committee (with a majority of membership being parents, front-line workers, and representatives of community-rooted organizations)
- Establishing a fund development committee to identify sources of implementation funding, including American Rescue Plan funds
- Learning more about collective impact models and identifying a model that is likely to work best in Durham
- With the steering committee: building relationships; setting principles for power-sharing and fund allocation; identifying the best long-term staffing structure for plan implementation; and prioritizing strategies for investment and action
- For the strategies prioritized by the steering committee: confirming implementation partners for each strategy; launching more detailed implementation planning for each strategy with those partners; creating cost estimates for each strategy; where possible, beginning implementation for prioritized strategies

For questions about this report, please contact Bonnie Delaune at bonnie.delaune@dci-nc.org or Cate Elander at celander@dconc.gov.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR NEXT STEPS](#)



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